

BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE

DEATH IN CUSTODY REPORTING ACT: HOW TO REPORT PRISON-BASED DEATHS

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How To Report Prison-Based Deaths



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This is part of a training series of videos designed to help states comply with Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA; [Public Law 113-242](#)).

This presentation will cover the following topics:

- What is a state prison?
- Reporting requirements.
- How to correctly report public and private state prisons.
- How to correctly code manner of death.
- Non-reportable deaths.
- Brief circumstances.

What is a State Prison?



Any correctional facility operated by a state corrections agency including those that are jointly operated with local counties. This includes:

- Privately operated facilities under contract with the state.
- State-run boot camps.
- Juvenile correctional facilities that are operated by the state.
- Any other facility under operational control of the state correction agency.
- Work-release centers and halfway houses operated by, or under contract with, the state department of corrections.

What Data Must State Administering Agencies Report?



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For each prison-based death, State Administering Agencies (SAAs) must submit the following:

- The name, gender, race, ethnicity, and birth year of the deceased.
- The date, time, and location of death.
- The name of the department or agency that had custody of the deceased.
- A brief description of the circumstances surrounding the death.

How To Correctly Report Public & Private State Prisons



- State prisons and privately operated facilities under contract with the state should be reported as either:
 - State prison
 - State run boot camp prison
 - Contracted boot camp prison

For example, South Bay Correctional Facility is a private state prison in South Bay, FL. Decedent records should indicate **State Prison** for Question 3D.*

- Other local or correctional facilities (to include any juvenile facility) should **ONLY** be selected if the decedent was in custody of a:
 - Juvenile facility
 - Work-release center, halfway house, or treatment facility (operated by or under contract with the state)

*This example is provided for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to imply any known reportable death.

How To Correctly Code Manner Of Death



Manner of Death	Scenarios
Accident	Include but not limited to: motor vehicle fatality during prison transport, fall from bunk bed.
Death Attributed to Use of Force by a Law Enforcement Officer or Corrections Officer	Include but not limited to: death resulting from being placed in prone position, tased, or having an adverse reaction to a chemical agent deployed by corrections officers.
Execution	Include but not limited to: lethal injection, electrocution.
Homicide	Include but not limited to: an altercation or fight between two incarcerated individuals.
Natural Causes	Include but not limited to: cancer, heart disease, liver disease, respiratory disease.
Other	Include but not limited to: fentanyl overdose, alcohol intoxication, drug or alcohol withdrawal, COVID-19, found unresponsive in cell (cause unknown).
Suicide	Include but not limited to: suffocation (e.g., hanging and self-strangulation), self-inflicted cuts or burns.

Non-Reportable Deaths



Non-Reportable Deaths	Exceptions (Reportable)
Parole/Probation	Manner of death is use of force by law enforcement OR the individual has been paroled to finish their sentence in a halfway house contracted by the state and the death occurs within the facility are reportable.
Medical Parole/ Compassionate Release	Deaths occurring when an individual is on medical furlough but had been expected to return to custody following treatment are reportable. (e.g., if not for the precipitating event or underlying medical condition would the person still be in the correctional facility).
Work-Release	Deaths that occur within a work-release center under state contract are reportable. Deaths occurring outside of the facility are not reportable.
Ankle Monitor or Another Global Position System (GPS) Device	Only if death occurs during arrest.
Halfway House (Not Under State Contract)	Only if death occurs during arrest.
Police Officers/Corrections Officers	No exceptions. Deaths of law enforcement are reportable to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program.

For more information on non-reportable deaths, please review the [DCRA Reporting Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions](#).

Brief Circumstances



- Each decedent's brief circumstances should include details leading to the death (e.g., the number and affiliation of parties involved in the incident, the location and characteristics of the incident, and any other context related to the death).
- If the death occurred outside the prison (e.g., hospital, prisoner transport, escape), provide the exact location of death in Question 3C and the name of the prison facility in which the decedent was in custody in Question 4. SAAs may also include the prison facility name in the brief circumstances.

Decedent Record Example



Question 3C – Location of Death	Question 4 – Custodial Department or Agency
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Location name (if applicable): Emory University Hospital• Street Address: 1364 Clifton Rd• City: Atlanta• State: GA• Zip code: 30322	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agency name: Georgia Diagnostic and Classification State Prison

Question 6 - Brief Circumstances

On January 30, 2023, at approximately 10:00 a.m., officers noticed John Doe having a medical emergency in the dayroom of the Georgia Diagnostic and Classification State Prison. Officers radioed for medical personnel who quickly responded on scene and determined John Doe was experiencing cardiac arrest. Medical personnel administered an AED to stabilize John Doe and ordered him to be transported to the hospital. John Doe expired at Emory University Hospital at 02:30 p.m.

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Insufficient vs. Sufficient Brief Circumstances



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Insufficient	Sufficient
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide no detail or very few details regarding the death in custody.• Analysts are unable to confirm whether the death is reportable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide clear details regarding the death in custody:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Who○ What○ When○ Where○ Why• Analysts can confirm the death is reportable.

Sufficient Brief Circumstances



Brief circumstances will be considered sufficient if the following details are provided:

- **Who:** number of individuals involved in any altercations preceding death (e.g., number of incarcerated individuals involved or law enforcement officers on scene).
- **What:** specific manner of death (e.g., end-stage liver disease, stab wounds from an altercation, asphyxiation due to being placed in prone position while restrained).
- **When:** general time of day that the death occurred (e.g., morning, afternoon, evening, overnight).
- **Where:** location of the decedent (e.g., prison cell, scene of altercation, medical facility).
- **Why:** if applicable, include why initial contact was made with the decedent (e.g., decedent was uncooperative during a routine safety check).

Insufficient vs. Sufficient Brief Circumstances



Manner of Death	Insufficient	Sufficient
Accident	Accidental death while in custody	John Doe fell from the top bunk in his cell at Wilcox State Prison on January 1, 2023, and suffered a neck fracture. He was taken to the Medical Unit for treatment and observation however, his health began to rapidly decline. He was pronounced dead at 01:05 a.m. on January 5, 2023.
Death attributed to use of force by a law enforcement or corrections officer	Restraint	Jane Doe, housed in the State Correctional Institution-Muncy, was being transferred between pods on November 6, 2021, when she became agitated and began resisting commands. Four additional officers were called in to assist the two onsite. She was restrained and placed into the prone position where she became unresponsive. Officers initiated CPR, but she expired on scene at 12:58 p.m.
Execution	Execution	John Doe was executed via lethal injection on April 27, 2022, ordered by the Missouri Courts.

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Insufficient vs. Sufficient Brief Circumstances



Manner of Death	Insufficient	Sufficient
Homicide	Altercation in prison	On January 30, 2021, John Doe was stabbed in the stomach by another incarcerated individual in the dining hall at Indiana State Prison. He was quickly transported to the local hospital; however, after several surgeries and multiple organ system failures, he was pronounced dead at 11:32 p.m.
Natural Causes	Prolonged Illness	Jane Doe was found unresponsive in her cell on June 15, 2022, at approximately 08:30 a.m. at the Ohio Reformatory for Women. Medical personnel began life saving measures but were unsuccessful and declared Jane Doe dead at the scene. Jane Doe had a history of hypertensive heart disease.
Other	Overdose	John Doe exhibited signs of a medical emergency during dinner on October 6, 2022, and was transferred to the Westville Correctional Facility infirmary. Medical personnel examined John Doe and determined he overdosed on Fentanyl. John Doe was given several doses of Narcan; however, his health quickly deteriorated, and he expired on scene at 6:55 p.m.
Suicide	Suicide	Officers found Jane Doe hanging in her cell on April 18, 2022, at approximately 2:00 p.m. at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women.

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Contact Information



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Thank you for your hard work and dedication.